

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 30, 2012

The Honorable Jo-Ellen Darcy  
Assistant Secretary for Civil Works  
United States Department of the Army  
United States Department of Defense  
108 Army Pentagon, Room 3E446  
Washington, DC 20310-0108

Dear Assistant Secretary Darcy:

It is my understanding that the United States Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) will be submitting to Congress by February 6 a list of projects that will be funded with the additional money included in the Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act of 2012 (P.L. 112- 55).

As you know, North Carolina's inlets and waterways are critical to our coastal communities and the state's economy. While I understand the budget constraints facing all federal agencies, I urge you to allocate funding in FY2012 and include funding in the FY2013 budget request for the following projects:

- **Wilmington Harbor/Bald Head Island.** There is a \$16 million shortfall in FY2012 O&M funding for the Wilmington Harbor. Without additional funding, the Corps will once again be unable to honor the Wilmington Harbor Project Sand Management Plan (SMP) agreed to in 2000 when the channel was upgraded.

As you may recall, the SMP was drafted by the Corps to secure support for the Wilmington Harbor Project. As originally prescribed by the SMP, the Wilmington Harbor navigation channel requires continual dredging to manage all 27 miles. The SMP calls for dredging of the portions nearest to Bald Head Island every two years, with sand being distributed to several local beach communities. However, due to budgetary cutbacks, the Corps has not maintained the schedule set forth in the SMP, resulting in continued shoaling and erosion on BHI. The portion of the channel most important to BHI has not been dredged since 2009, and BHI has not received sand from Corps dredging since 2007.

- **Oregon Inlet (Manteo Bay).** Shoaling in the Oregon Inlet is increasingly problematic, but federal funding to ensure this waterway is passable continues to decline sharply. The FY2012 Appropriations bill includes \$980,000 for operation and maintenance (O&M) funding for the inlet. This amount is \$7.43 million below FY2008 levels, \$5.52 million below FY2009 levels, and \$2.77 million below FY2010 levels. Given the May 2003 CEQ/NOAA/Corps decision to prevent construction of a jetty, sufficient funding must be allocated to keep this waterway passable for commercial fishing vessels, charter fishing fleets, and recreational boaters.

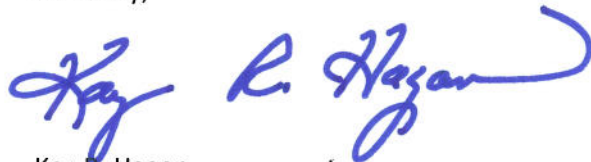
- **Shallow Water Dredging Capabilities.** The State of North Carolina is trying to complete a long-term Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Army Corps of Engineers Wilmington District to allow the state to provide \$5 million per year in contributed funds to dredge shallow water inlets and ferry channels with the Merritt dredge. Given last year's decision to scrap the Fry, it is imperative that the Merritt not be mothballed. Thus, I request federal funding to cover at least half of the cost (\$2.5 million) to keep the Merritt operational.

No O&M funding was included in FY2012 for many of North Carolina's shallow water inlets -- Bogue, Carolina Beach, Morehead City, New River, New Topsail, Carolina Beach, and Masonboro. Keeping the Merritt operational will ensure these shallow water inlets are maintained.

Allocating additional O&M funding for the Rollison Channel and Silver Lake Harbor is also critically important. The Corps must have funding to ensure ferry access to Hatteras, Ocracoke, and Cedar Island. Without road access, ferry service for residents and visitors to these islands is a matter of public safety -- a lesson we learned following Hurricane Irene.

Thank you for your consideration of these requests. These projects are critically important to North Carolina, and I urge you to sufficiently fund all of them.

Sincerely,



Kay R. Hagan  
United States Senator